



STAKEHOLDERS' PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Prof. Rimantas Želvys
Minsk, September 23-24

data



The role of external stakeholders

- One of the ways of ensuring public participation in higher education is involving representatives of external stakeholders
- In the last several decades there was a significant reinforcement of the role of external stakeholders in defining goals and directions of development of higher educational institutions.
- The expectation to meet demands from business, local industry and local communities is an often emphasized priority in Western European higher education policy.



Is the involvement a simple task?

- One may assume that higher educational institutions should just include several external representatives into their governing institutional structures and the question is settled.
- However, in reality it's not as simple as it seems.
- First and foremost we must find the answers to the following crucially important questions: how to select candidates, how many stakeholders we should include, whom to select and what powers they should exercise.



How are the representatives of external stakeholders selected/appointed?

- Institutions of higher education may themselves select the candidates.
- Stakeholders should be appointed by the Ministry of Education or other governmental structures.
- A non-governmental organization can suggest and/or select external representatives among the candidates presented to them.
- Appointment suggestions may be obligatory or recommended.



What should be the proportion of their participation?

- External stakeholders make a minority in a governing body – but then their participation may be just formal.
- External representatives make a majority – but in this case the question of academic autonomy may arise.
- Equal participation of internal and external stakeholders – but then the decision-making process may be paralyzed.
- For the sake of effectiveness the number should be uneven and the board shouldn't be too large (e. g. 9-11 members).



What should be the characteristics of external stakeholders?

- Members of the Parliament and the Government as well as civil servants of political (personal) confidence should not be members of the council.
- A logical option should be the inclusion of representatives of business and commerce.
- Prominent public figures, artists, journalists or sportsmen could be another option.
- One of the acceptable options is to include former managers in education with a vast experience in this field.



What powers should the external stakeholders exercise?

- The powers of the board and external stakeholders may be limited to monitoring and control.
- The board and external stakeholders may be involved in the decision-taking process.
- The powers may be shared between the board and the Senate.
- However, distribution of powers makes the system of university governance rather complicated, slow and clumsy.



Conclusions

- Selection/appointment of external stakeholders is a complicated process with rather unpredictable results.
- Our experience shows that we need to try several different options before we find the optimal solution.
- However, it's one of the effective ways of public participation in modernization of higher education.
- Only the possession of decision-making powers can ensure effective participation of the representatives of wider society.